

The Benefits of Being Bilingual¹



Learning more than one language is an asset to individuals, families, and our entire society. Developing the child's home language provides the foundation for reading and writing and preparing children to be biliterate. Researchers have found that Individuals who are bilingual switch between two different language systems. Their brains are very active and flexible. There are many benefits to being bilingual and biliterate. Below are just a few:

Cognitive Development

Individuals who are bilingual and biliterate switch between two different language systems. Their brains are very active and flexible. Research also shows that, compared to their non-bilingual peers, bilingual people have an easier time:

- understanding math concepts and solving word problems,
- .-developing strong thinking skills,
- using logic,
- focusing, remembering, and making decisions,
- thinking about language, and
- learning other languages.

Social-Emotional Development

Being bilingual supports children in maintaining strong ties with their family, culture, and community. All of these are key parts of a child's developing identity. Bilingual children are also able to make new friends and create strong relationships using their second language—an important skill in our increasingly diverse society. Research has found that babies raised in bilingual households show better self-control, a key indicator of school success.

Learning

School readiness and success for children who are dual or multi language learners is tied directly to mastery of their home language. Bilingual and multilingual children benefit academically from knowing more than one language in many ways. Because they are able

¹ **Source:** US Department of Education.

to switch between languages, they develop more flexible approaches to thinking through problems. The ability to read and think in two (or more) different languages promotes higher levels of abstract thought, which is important in learning. Current research shows that people who use more than one language appear better at blocking out irrelevant information, a benefit that may exist as early as seven months of age. Children who learn to read in their home language have a strong foundation to build upon when they learn a second language. They can easily apply their knowledge about reading to their second language.

Long-Term Success

One-half to two-thirds of adults around the world speak at least two languages. In today's global society, they have many advantages. Globally, bilingual and biliterate adults have more job opportunities than monolingual adults. Bilingual and biliterate individuals have the opportunity to participate in the global community in more ways, get information from more places, and learn more about people from other cultures.